

Washington, DC - Thousands of Vietnam Veterans and their families who have struggled to receive compensation with side-effects due to Agent Orange exposure will soon be eligible for assistance. On Tuesday, Congressman Harry Teague helped pass the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2010, which included \$13.4 billion in compensation to Vietnam veterans to implement a recent decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand the number of illnesses presumed to be related to exposure to Agent Orange.

"For too long, thousands of Vietnam Veterans and their family members have struggled to gain official recognition of both the first and secondhand effects of Agent Orange. For their brave service to our country, our veterans - and their families - deserve quality healthcare without having to bargain or fight for benefits," said Harry Teague, New Mexico's only member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "I am proud that we have taken this step to provide the resources to adequately address the needs of our Vietnam veterans and provide them and their families with the assistance that they have earned."

Recently, the Department of Veterans Affairs published a proposed regulation that would expand the number of health complications eligible for Agent Orange exposure compensation. In addition, the funding, mandated by the VA and requested by the President, will be made available to Vietnam veterans, or their survivors, who were previously denied disability compensation. The VA estimates that approximately 86,000 veterans are now eligible for retroactive compensation.

Teague has made veterans' issues a top priority since he was elected to Congress, helping to secure advanced appropriations funding for the VA and introducing legislation aimed at addressing and reducing the impact of mental health issues like PTSD have on the lives of returning veterans. He has also worked to build awareness of veterans' issues through his recent "Veterans Bill of Rights" legislation proposal and by honoring service members and veterans with programs like the "Veteran of the Month". He also led a bi-partisan group in forming the Congressional Invisible Wounds Caucus, to promote awareness of and solutions for the mental health challenges facing our service members and veterans.